

THE weaknesses in this season's Wycombe Wanderers team were cruelly exposed by Tooting and Mitcham on Saturday, when they went away from Loakes Park with three Isthmian League points.

Tooting drummed the point home — Wycombe just weren't good enough on the day and they will continue to struggle against the top sides unless new blood is introduced into the team.

At times on Saturday Wycombe were outclassed by their London opponents, whom they beat twice last

Wycombe Wanderers 0, Tooting and M. 2 Report by STUART EARP

season. Clearly some of the players just did not look good enough to compete with the best in the league — something that has not been said about Wycombe for many years.

In the last ten seasons the number of sides who have outplayed the Blues could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Tooting must now be added to the list which will continue to grow unless changes are made at Loakes Park.

This might seem harsh criticism. But Wycombe have set their own sky-high standards over the years and must now be judged by them.

This defeat is not the end of the world but it stands as a clear lesson of how they will fare this season unless new players are introduced to the team.

There were times on Saturday when Tooting dominated long stages of the game, particularly in the second half when they scored both goals. The visitors looked the better side all-round — sharper, more skilful and far superior in the basics of the game.

So where do Wycombe go from here? In my opinion they need at least two forwards and a midfield player if they are to challenge for honours this season. Also, the back four should return to its normal set-up with Paul Birdseye returning to right back and Bob Davies to

the number three shirt. Perhaps Steve Vass should be tried in midfield for after two games it seems he has much to offer.

The back four has been Wanderers' one success this season and although the changes worked against Southall, the balance was upset against Tooting. I would also like to see Steve Pratt given a full game with Wanderers playing their normal 4-3-3 formation. Pratt has had only 20 minutes to show what he can do so far this season and he deserves a better chance.

MISTAKES

But whatever team takes the field, Wanderers must improve their passing accuracy. Time and again they gave the ball away through mistakes which put more and more pressure on the defence.

The inaccuracy affected the whole team and it meant that Wycombe were only dangerous when players showed their own individual skills. A classic example was Mick Holifield, whose blistering runs from midfield were always threatening. If the team could have combined with him, the result might have been different.

Wanderers, who lost Keith Mead with a head injury for five minutes in the first half, took a long time to get going. Paul Birdseye and Holifield provided the only sparks of hope with useful efforts but Tooting keeper Paul Priddy was never seriously tested.

Best moment of the first half came when Holifield beat three men in a left wing run and cut into the box along the by-line. Howard Kennedy failed to make the most of the cross at close range. At the other end Alan Ives was a constant danger and he was only a foot wide with a curling shot just before the break from Steve Grubb's long free kick.

CAUGHT COLD

One incident at the start of the second half could have changed the whole outcome of the game. Tooting were caught cold when Tony Horseman flicked on Kennedy's free kick. The ball fell onto the boot of Holifield but he skied his shot high over the bar with only Priddy to beat.

Tooting showed how chances should be snapped up at the other end when they went ahead after 51 minutes. John Maskell dropped a free kick and gave away a corner. Wycombe failed to clear at the near post and the massive Grubb turned the ball home as he fell.

The volatile Dave Juneman was booked by referee Richardson after 55 minutes but this did nothing to hinder Tooting's steady progress. Playing tidy, accurate football, they established a grip on the game which they held until the close.

Alan Phillips blocked an Ives shot on the line before the visitors made it 2-0 after 65 minutes. Juneman took the ball down 25 yards out, turned inside and unleashed a powerful left foot drive which Maskell pushed up into the air and watched helplessly as it bounced behind him and into the net.

HORSEMAN CLASS

The veteran Horseman produced a memory from the past with a superb run in the 67th minute which ended with a clever chip just over the top. It was an all-too-rare glimpse of class from the Blues.

Pratt replaced Kennedy with 13 minutes left and produced a fine run in the last minute which saw Priddy go full length for the first time in the match. Unfortunately the ball flew just wide. For the rest of the time Tooting just played a simple game and denied Wanderers possession with some lovely passing that has been the hallmark of Wycombe's game in past seasons.

On this evidence, Tooting will do well this season. As for Wycombe, there must be a great improvement all-round if they are to maintain their standards of the past.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, R. Davies, K. Mead, A. Phillips, S. Vass, P. Birdseye, J. Priestley, M. Holifield, H. Kennedy (sub S. Pratt 72 mins), D. Evans, A. Horseman.

TOOTING: P. Priddy, T. Ford, W. Smith, S. Grubb, R. Green, D. Casey, C. Woffenden, J. Keefe, D. Dennis, D. Juneman (sub D. Roberts 87 mins), A. Ives.

Referee: M. Richardson (Chislehurst).
Half-time: 0-0. Goalscorers: Tooting — Grubb (51), Juneman (65).
Attendance: 1,150.

Latest table

ISTHMIAN LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dagenham	7	6	0	1	17	9	13
Tooting	7	6	0	1	13	5	13
Enfield	7	5	1	1	13	6	16
Carshalton	7	4	2	1	16	8	14
Barking	6	4	1	1	11	5	13
Hitchin	6	4	1	1	6	3	13
Staines	6	3	3	0	8	4	12
Sutton	7	3	2	2	8	5	11
Wycombe	7	3	1	3	8	9	10
Leatherhead	7	2	3	2	6	3	9
Kingston	6	2	2	2	9	7	8
Hendon	7	2	2	3	7	9	8
Haves	7	2	2	3	5	7	8
W'hamstow	5	2	1	2	5	0	7
Southall	6	2	1	3	7	9	7
Boreham W	6	2	0	4	9	14	6
L'stone	6	1	3	2	5	5	5
Tilbury	6	1	2	3	7	11	5
Croydon	7	1	1	5	7	12	4
Slough	5	0	2	3	5	9	2
Woking	6	0	1	5	3	12	1
Stonford	7	0	0	7	7	22	0

WYCOMBE SIGNING

WYCOMBE Wanderers, worried by some indifferent performances and their lack of strength in depth this season, have signed on a midfield player Farouki Quirishi and are also hoping to regain the services of Derek Harris this week.

Quirishi is included in the Blues squad for tonight's (Tuesday) visit to Staines in the Isthmian League. During the summer he was playing for Tampa Bay Rowdies in the U.S.A., facing such stars as George Best, Pele and Franz Beckenbauer. He came back to this country and played for Southampton Reserves but left when he was unable to gain a regular place in the Saints side. He has previously played for Slough.

Wanderers have been interested in signing Derek Harris for some time this season to strengthen their front line. Derek, a centre forward, spent half a season with the Blues three years ago but was unable to claim a first team place. He then joined Southall.

Wycombe have put in an offer for the player but it is understood that Southall will not part with him for under a fee of £1,500.

Derek, who lives in Aylesbury, was Southall's leading goalscorer last season.

Wycombe face a tough task at Staines tonight as the Middlesex club are the only unbeaten side left in the league. They have won three and drawn three of their matches to date and overcame Leatherhead 1-0 at home on Saturday.

Staines have kept most of last year's side together and have signed goalkeeper Dave Collyer from Kingstonian. He replaced Frank Parsons who left the club after a dispute over wages. The only other player to leave was Billy Salkeld, who signed for Leatherhead.

Wanderers manager John Reardon will have to decide whether to throw his new signing, Quirishi, in at the deep end which could mean the back four returning to its normal pattern with Paul Birdseye reverting to full back.

Hendon away

WYCOMBE Wanderers' fixture on Saturday in the Isthmian League Premier Division has been changed. The Blues were due to travel to Enfield but instead are away to Hendon. This is because Enfield are involved in the FA Cup.

Youth Cup

FLACKWELL Heath Minors will represent Wycombe Wanderers F.C. in the new Isthmian League Youth Cup this season. The team will play their home matches at Loakes Park on Wednesday evenings and 24 clubs have entered.